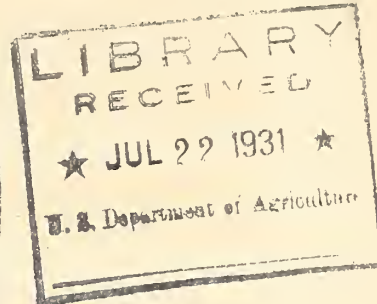
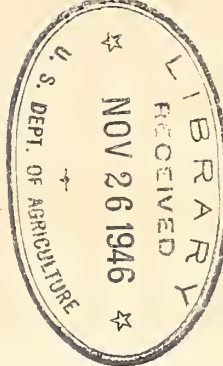


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Excerpt from a radio talk by  
W. W. Vincent, chief, western district,  
Food and Drug Administration, U. S.  
Department of Agriculture, delivered  
through KGO, San Francisco, and associated  
N.B.C. stations, July 16, 1931.



Serial No. 49

## HOW TO READ THE LABEL

### Asparagus

Asparagus is a rather interesting plant, a perennial. There are over 150 species. Our cultivated variety is known as "asparagus officinalis" -- cultivated since early times. And we eat a lot of it. The United States produces enormous quantities. California alone in 1930 canned 2,663,191 cases. Lots of discrimination possible in the purchase of this huge amount. Some canners present you with as many as 27 different styles or varieties of packs. While there is no uniform specification followed by all canners, the nomenclature applied to the product is pretty well standardized. Let's start our discussion with the methods of canning:

The small shoots are harvested when just breaking through the soil or shortly after having emerged. As received at the cannery, the asparagus has been cut in about seven-inch lengths-- which cuts were made under ground. At the cannery it is graded to size and cut to uniform lengths by machines. Women sort out unsightly or defective spears. After washing in cold water, the asparagus is immersed in boiling water. This blanches or whitens it. Next it is cut to proper lengths and packed in cans, after which hot brine is added; the cans are sealed and cooked in steam retorts. To insure sterility of asparagus packed in California, the California State Department of Public Health made compulsory regulations providing the time and temperature of cooking to which each size can must be subjected. Inspectors check the cooks on each batch produced.

Now, you should know that the diameter of the asparagus stalks is of importance. The diameter governs the grading of the various sizes packed in cans. Since many asparagus labels bear the grade designations upon them, you should know that the term, "Giant", means asparagus of 1 inch diameter at the base. Most of that goes to the fresh market. The term "Colossal" means asparagus of 7/8 inch diameter; "Mammoth", 3/4 inch; "Large", 5/8 inch; "Medium", 1/2 inch; "Small", 3/8 inch and "Tiny" under 3/8 inch diameter. The man who selected these grade names must have been addicted to the use of superlatives. Ungraded asparagus contains all sizes, including flowered and misshapen spears. It is principally ungraded material that your so-called soup stock contains.

In addition to size, color is of importance. Cannerys separate asparagus into lots light green in color, all white, or natural, that is, bearing a purplish tinge. This latter product goes chiefly to export trade, although you will see some labeled, "Natural", on the domestic market. Since some individuals, as well as some markets, express a preference for  
over

either the green or white grades, you will frequently see label declarations indicating the product is "white" or "green", or "all green".

You may observe the words "Peeled Asparagus" - That means the outer skin has been removed. It is considered a superior product and will cost you more money.

Asparagus comes to you in both square and round cans. The small square can is called a No. 1 Square, while the tall square can is called a No. 2-1/2 Square. In the round cans you receive asparagus in what is called the "picnic", or small tin, contents about 10 ozs.; in the No. 1 tall, contents about 15 ozs.; in the No. 2 tall, contents about 1 lb. 4 ozs.; the 2-1/2 tall, contents 1 lb. 12 ozs. and in the large, or No. 10 can with total contents of about 6 lbs. 4 ozs. The various grades, that is, "Giant", "Colossal", "Mammoth", etc., are packed in the different sizes of tins. So careful label reading, if you know your grades and their diameters, will enable you to know how many stalks you are receiving.

NUMBER OF STALKS PER CAN FOR VARIOUS GRADES AND SIZES

	No. 2-1/2 or Tall Sq. Can.	No. 1 Tall or Salmon Style	No. 1 Square Net wt. 15 oz.	Picnic or Small Can Net Wt. 10 ozs.
Giant	8 to 12	8 to 9	This grade not ordinarily packed.	
Colossal	13 to 16	10 to 12	12 to 20	6 to 10
Mammoth	17 to 24	13 to 16	21 to 30	11 to 16
Large	25 to 34	17 to 23	31 to 40	17 to 22
Medium	35 to 44	24 to 35	41 to 60	23 to 30
Small	45 to 60	36 to 50	61 to 80	31 to 45
Tiny		51 to 70	81 to 100	46 to 60

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These four cans represent sizes most generally used.

Since asparagus is served in various ways -- the long stalks, hot; the shorter stalks in salads and for garnishings; the shorter tips as a salad vegetable, as in combination salads -- it seems to me that you housewives, expecting six guests for dinner, need to know the grades if you are going to get exactly what you want. So, I am giving you a picture of the actual grades, and their sizes.

Now, you will encounter in all sizes of cans a product labeled "Salad Points", that is, the asparagus tips, ranging in length from 1 to 2-1/2 inches. Their diameter range usually varies between that of the mammoth and small sizes. The very large and the very small are excluded. Ordinarily, the salad points command a lower price than does the product labeled "Asparagus Tips", which is cut to the uniform length of 3-1/8 inches, or 3-5/8 inches, depending on size of can used. Should you encounter a label reading "Asparagus Soup Tips", or "Asparagus Tips", the can must contain nothing but the tip portions, whereas a label reading "Asparagus Center Cuts" will contain no tip pieces. A product labeled merely "Cut Asparagus", or "Asparagus Soup Cuts", will contain both tips and center cut or butt pieces. The ratio between center and butt pieces to tips is about 2 to 1 in a product labeled "Cut Asparagus" or "Soup Cuts".



# ASPARAGUS GRADES

(Nomenclature generally observed by California canners  
Diagrams portray approximate Grade Diameters - Length varies  
with can size.)

## GIANT

As received from the fields  
Bulk of this material goes to fresh market.

WASTE

COLOSSAL

WASTE

MAMMOTH

WASTE

LARGE

WASTE

CENTER  
CUT

MEDIUM

Such material usually labeled  
"Center Cuts - Tips Removed" or  
"Center Cuts - Asparagus"

WASTE

DENTER  
CUT

CENTER  
CUT

SMALL

Generally labeled "Salad Points"  
Range from 1 to 2½ inches long.

WASTE

SOUP

CUT

SOUP

CUT

SOUP

CUT

This product generally labeled "Asparagus Cuts",  
"Cut Asparagus" or "Asparagus Soup Cuts".  
Proper ratio is 1 tip piece to 2 center cuts.

